



Town Of Milford

OFFICE OF THE SELECTMEN

~ 2013 SELECTMEN'S REPORT ~

The 2013 Board of Selectmen opened its year by saying goodbye to Selectmen Tim Finan, who chose not to run for reelection, and welcoming Kevin Federico for his first term. Gary Daniels and Mark Fougere were elected as Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively.

The Board of Selectmen chose to focus its goals for the year on seven primary areas: Economic Development, Staffing, Technology, Services, Facilities and Infrastructure, Policies and Projects.

Economic Development

Increasing Milford's economic development has been an ongoing goal of the Board. The Board continues to look at factors that could assist in economically enhancing the town. Within that economic development goal the Board continues to pursue streamlining the Community Development application process for customer service efficiency, effectiveness and user friendliness, and looking for ways to market Milford as a business and/or tourist destination.

Community Development – The Board meets periodically with the Community Development Director for updates, and to provide the Board with a more thorough knowledge of the application processes used within the department. Streamlining the processes to enhance customer service is also an on-going goal of Community Development.

Online Access to Documents – The town ordinances are now available on-line, giving residents the opportunity to download these ordinances, as well as access a number of process documents that have been posted online that an applicant may download and fill out without having to go to Town Hall to retrieve the document. The Board recognizes that some documents will require additional physical documentation to submit with an application, and thus require an applicant to go to Town Hall. At this time, the functionality does not exist for completing and submitting documents online. Because there is much to the Community Development application process, the Board felt it would be prudent to thoroughly understand the various processes before making an assessment of the current processes and subsequently submitting any recommendations for enhancing effectiveness and customer satisfaction.

Marketing Milford – During interviews with committee, subcommittee and commission applicants, the Board frequently inquired and/or made suggestions as to what the respective entity could do to promote Milford as a tourist destination and/or a business location for those companies looking to expand or relocate. Particularly due to the lack of infrastructure, marketing of the former Brox property continues to be slow.

Reducing Unemployment – Within its economic goals, the Board sought to reduce the town's unemployment rate. Battling a national and state economy that continued to struggle into 2013, Milford unemployment rate hit 6.0% in January 2013, its highest rate for the town in 2013. Over the next 11 months Milford's unemployment rate fluctuated slightly as unemployment dropped to 4.4% in November, the latest statistics available at the writing of this report. This rate is 0.3% lower than the 4.7% rate for December 2012. While statistics for December were not yet available, it's easy to see that while unemployment has slowly dropped, the economy continues to struggle, offering additional challenges to the Board to find ways to get the economy moving again.

Staffing

Staffing needs to be assessed periodically to determine if it is at the correct level for providing effective customer service to taxpayers. In 2013, this included filling position vacancies, negotiating with one of our current bargaining units, and assessing the need for additional personnel going forward.

Staffing Review – In 2013 the Assistant Building Inspector vacancy was filled, the Assistant Recreation Coordinator position moved from part-time to full-time, an additional Police Officer was hired, and a new Recreation Director was hired.

Collective Bargaining Agreement – The town and the employees covered by an AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) contract agreed on a collective bargaining agreement that will be brought to the voters in March 2014 for ratification.

Technology

Our Information Technology Department continued to transition technology in ways that recognize that efficiencies and reduced information technology costs can be achieved by transitioning to virtual servers and expanding the VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) technology. In addition, the Board's initiative to enhance the transparency of town boards, committees, subcommittees and commissions, as well as providing enhanced user friendliness by posting municipal codes online, has been accomplished.

Technology Upgrades – Technology upgrades are on-going. Some transition to virtual servers has taken place. VOIP expansion has been completed except to the Department of Public Works.

Web Site – The Web site was overhauled and presents a more user-friendly experience to users.

Municipal Codes – All Milford codes have been posted online.

Minutes –Minutes of most all boards, committees, subcommittees, and commissions can now be obtained on the town Web site. Monitoring of the Web site is ongoing to ensure compliance with these posting requirements.

Services

There are numerous services offered by the town to its residents. The Board is very appreciative of the time that employees and volunteers contribute to the success of these programs. Periodically the Board reviews these services to assess their need and quality.

MACC (Milford Area Communication Center) – A new contract with MACC was signed. Analysis of whether or not there is a more efficient way of providing communication to our emergency services is ongoing, with the final analysis still under review.

2014 Town Budget – After enjoying an average annual increase of 0.6% in the budget from 2007-2012, the 2013 town budget approved by voters represented a 4.8% increase over the 2012 approved budget. In 2013 the Board was faced with not only some significant unexpected increases, but also the reality that the time had come to replace some of the town's more expensive service vehicles. That dilemma continues into 2014 as the Board faces numerous high-priced service requests, coupled with the realization that the town needs to start putting money into its roads and bridges before failures occur.

Facilities and Infrastructure

Items in this category are customarily expensive and long-term projects.

Ambulance Facility – The Ambulance Department moved into its new facility in December 2013.

Roads, Bridges and Other Infrastructure – Recognizing that the Board needed to address the issue of roads and bridges that needed, or would soon need repair, the Board reviewed with the Town Administrator and the DPW Director the maintenance plans for roads, bridges and storm water and assessed their effect on short-term and long-term BOS goals. A warrant article pertinent to bridge repair will appear on the 2014 warrant.

Town Hall Renovations – After receiving new cost estimates of approximately \$2.5 million for Town Hall renovations, the Board determined that the project needed further review and chose not to put the full project on the 2014 warrant. Adding to the complexity of initiating this project is the CIP proposal for expanding the library in 2015.

Policies

The Board looked at modifying numerous policies in 2013, including:

Towing Policy – The Milford Police Department proposed to the Board a new Towing Policy in March 2013. The Board accepted the proposal and authorized the Milford Police Department to administer the policy.

Mission Statement – Mission Statements were requested, received and reviewed to ensure that all departments were moving forward with the same overall goal.

Meeting Minutes – The policy of requiring that minutes of meetings be taken and posted was a directive from the Board to ensure that transparency existed among the committees, subcommittees and commissions and that this information was easily accessible to residents.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) – A CIP presentation was made by the CIP Advisory Committee to the Board of Selectmen. This CIP Plan was subsequently reviewed and utilized by Selectmen in their development of the 2014 Town Warrant.

Establish BOS Goals Earlier – In the past, the Board waited until the next Board was seated in March before setting its goals. The 2012 Board saw benefit in establishing goals in December 2012 for 2013 to ensure that its goals for the ensuing year and the objectives established by the Town Administrator for 2013 were in alignment. This worked well and the 2013 Board will establish its 2014 goals in December 2013 or early January 2014.

Meeting With Budget Advisory Committee – The Board requested a meeting with the Budget Advisory Committee to discuss expectations of each entity and to improve lines of communication during the 2014 budget process.

2013 Legislation – In 2012, the Board identified state issues that presented obstacles to local initiatives. Legislation was introduced in the 2013 legislative session that set a \$10,000 cap on the amount that the state could charge a city or town for a permit to dredge a municipal pond or lake. The cost of the permit to dredge Osgood Pond would have exceeded \$100,000. With the passage of the legislation, that permit cost is now capped at \$10,000. In addition, legislation relative to property tax deferral and posting periods also passed. Legislation for the 2014 legislative session has been introduced relative to prorating elderly exemptions under certain circumstances.

Administration Document – The Board created an Administration Document to assist commissions, committees and special boards in the performance of their duties. The document gives guidance as to how meetings are to be run, how minutes are to be taken and posted. In addition it informs chairmen under what statutory circumstances they may go into a non-public session, and how that non-public session must be conducted. The document also identifies the various commissions, committees and special boards that exist, with specific information pertinent to the respective committee.

Fiscal Year Realignment – The Board discussed changing the town's fiscal year from a calendar year to July 1- June 30 to better align the fiscal year with the passage of the budget each March at Town Vote. Under current statutes, if the town were to undertake this realignment it would require the collection of 18 months of taxes. Action at the state legislative level in 2013 seeks to improve this process in an effort to eliminate or alleviate a financial hardship on taxpayers. Currently, the town operates for most of the first quarter of the year without a budget (our fiscal year starts on January 1), until the annual budget is approved by voters in March. If the fiscal year was changed, the budget approved in March would be enacted July 1st. No legislative movement was made in this area

Road, Bridge and Storm Water Maintenance Plans – The Board received periodic updates from Department of Public Works Director. While discussions of these maintenance plans took place, the Board took a closer look at this infrastructure in 2013

to assess the condition and the needs of each area and incorporate that assessment into the short-term and long-term goals of the Board.

Projects

Items in this category are customarily long-term projects involving state and/or federal agencies, thereby creating dependencies and timeframes over which the Board has no control.

Osgood Pond – The permitting process has begun to dredge Osgood Pond. A permit application has been submitted to dredge 11+ acres, that will be completed over four phases. The final cost to undertake the dredging of these four phases has yet to be determined.

Fletcher EPA Site – We have not yet received confirmation from the EPA on approval of the 100% remediation plan. Cleanup was expected to start in summer 2013. With this delay, it is currently unknown when cleanup will begin.

Dam Removal – There is currently a study in progress that seeks to determine if it is reasonable, feasible, and financially prudent to remove the Goldman and McLane Dams (both located on the Souhegan River adjacent to downtown). It was hoped that the Dam Removal Feasibility Study will be completed and presented to the public later in 2013. It was not and we are currently waiting on reports from the EPA.

Conclusion

Though some economical gain was achieved in 2013, overall, the year still suffered the effects of an economy that has not yet rebounded. The Board wishes to extend its thanks to the Town Administrator, Department Heads, and all town employees for their extraordinary efforts to control expenses, maximize efficiencies, and to do whatever it took to help the town navigate through these tough economic times.

As we begin 2014, the challenges facing the Board continue to grow, primarily in assessing the replacement of high cost capital items. While the economy continues to create financial challenges, be assured that the Board will do its best in weighing its options and making its decisions. It is our honor to serve as your Selectmen and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve the citizens of Milford.

Respectfully, the Milford Board of Selectmen,

Gary Daniels, Chairman

Mark Fougere, Vice Chairman

Kathy Bauer

Kevin Federico

Mike Putnam